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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 COLOMBO 000444

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: COUNTRY TEAM ASSESSMENT FOR USCG 41-FOOT UTILITY BOAT

REF: LOR SUBMISSION FOR 41-FOOT UTILITY BOAT

1. THE GOVERNMENT OF SRI LANKA HAS SUBMITTED REFERENCE (FORWARDED UNDER SEPARATE COVER) REQUEST FOR EDA TRANSFER OF 41-FOOT US COAST GUARD UTILITY BOAT. BOTH THE SRI LANKAN NAVY (SLN) AND SRI LANKAN POLICE - PARAMILITARY BRANCH, THE SPECIAL TASK FORCE (STF) HAVE EXPRESSED AN INTEREST IN OBTAINING THIS PLATFORM FOR MARITIME AND RIVERINE OPERATIONS. THE SLN IS REQUESTING 4-5 BOATS, THE STF IS INTERESTED IN OBTAINING 2-3 BOATS.

2. AMEMBASSY COLOMBO STRONGLY SUPPORTS THIS SALE AND IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 70003 OF THE SAMM, THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION IS SUBMITTED:

A. SRI LANKA REQUIRES THE 41-FOOT UTILITY BOAT IN ORDER TO IMPROVE ITS MARITIME AND RIVERINE SURVEILLANCE AND INTERDICTION CAPABILITIES. IN PARTICULAR, THE SLN REQUIRES THIS PLATFORM FOR SEARCH AND INTERDICTION OPERATIONS WITHIN THE ECONOMIC EXCLUSIVE ZONE AND IN SUPPORT OF GWOT. THE BOATS WOULD ALSO BE USED TO PERFORM ROUTINE MAINTENANCE AND SUPPORT FUNCTIONS CURRENTLY DONE BY COMBAT CAPABLE VESSELS. THE STF REQUIRES THE UTILITY BOAT FOR RIVERINE SEARCH OPERATIONS, ESPECIALLY IN THE EASTERN REGION, WHERE THE SRI LANKAN POLICE CURRENTLY LACK THE CAPABILITY TO TRACK AND PURSUE INDIVIDUALS TRAVERSING INTERNAL WATERWAYS. A US-DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE ASSESSMENT OF THE SRI LANKAN MILITARY IN SEPTEMBER 2002 REPORTED LIMITED MARITIME SURVEILLANCE AND INTERDICTION CAPABILITY TO BE THE CENTER OF GRAVITY IN THE WAR AGAINST THE LTTE. ALTHOUGH A CEASE-FIRE HAS BEEN IN EFFECT FOR OVER TWO YEARS, THE LTTE SEA TIGERS CONTINUE TO OPERATE IN BOTH COASTAL AND INLAND WATERS. GREATER SURVEILLANCE AND INTERDICTION CAPABILITY ARE REQUIRED TO ENSURE THAT THE TERMS OF THE CEASE-FIRE ARE BEING ADHERED TO AND THAT SRI LANKA REMAINS AT PEACE.

B. THE ADDITION OF 41-FOOT UTILITY BOATS TO THE SLN FLEET WOULD IMPROVE THE COUNTRY'S ABILITY TO REACH ITS NATIONAL SECURITY OBJECTIVES AND DETER POTENTIAL LTTE VIOLATIONS OF THE CEASE-FIRE AGREEMENT BY INCREASING THE NUMBER OF SLN HULLS IN THE WATER AND RETURNING SEVERAL COMBAT CAPABLE BOATS TO THEIR PREFERRED ROLES. THE ACQUISITION OF THE UTILITY BOAT WOULD NOT ALTER THE CURRENT FORCE STRUCTURE. IN TERMS OF THE STF, THE UTILITY BOAT WOULD INCREASE THEIR EFFECTIVENESS IN PATROLLING INLAND WATERWAYS AND ASSIST THEM IN MAINTAINING RIVERINE SECURITY, ESPECIALLY IN THE EASTERN PROVINCE.

C. NO SIGNIFICANT NEGATIVE REACTION IS ANTICIPATED FROM SRI LANKA'S NEIGHBOR AS A RESULT OF THIS SALE. INDIA, SRI LANKA'S CLOSEST AND MOST STRATEGICALLY IMPORTANT NEIGHBOR, HAS ASSISTED SRI LANKA AGAINST THE LTTE IN A NUMBER OF WAYS, INCLUDING ASSISTANCE IN MARITIME INTERDICTION OPERATIONS. THE ACQUISITION OF A SYSTEM SUCH AS THE UTILITY BOAT WOULD DECREASE SRI LANKA'S DEPENDENCE ON INDIAN ASSISTANCE, AND WOULD LIKELY BE VIEWED POSITIVELY IN NEW DELHI.

D. SINCE THE NAVY ALREADY OPERATES A FLEET OF SIMILAR SIZED VESSELS, WITH PROPER TRAINING SAILORS IN THE SLN SHOULD HAVE NO TROUBLE OPERATING AND MAINTAINING THE UTILITY BOATS, AT LEAST UP TO AND INCLUDING THE INTERMEDIATE LEVEL. TRAINING AND SPARES ARE EXPECTED IN THE INITIAL TRANSFER, SO THE SLN AND STF WOULD LIKELY TRAIN DEDICATED PERSONNEL TO FOCUS ON UTILITY BOAT MAINTENANCE.

E. THIS IS AN EDA CASE. MINIMAL COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH THIS TRANSFER WOULD BE FINANCED WITH COUNTRY FUNDS. THESE EXPENSES WERE NOT INCLUDED IN THE ANNUAL DEFENSE PROCUREMENT BUDGET FOR 2004, HOWEVER, SENIOR OFFICIALS HAVE

INDICATED THAT FUNDING WOULD BE MADE AVAILABLE.  
THE OVERALL ECONOMIC IMPACT OF THE TRANSFER ON  
THE SRI LANKAN ECONOMY IS INSIGNIFICANT.

1F. ALTHOUGH HUMAN RIGHTS CONSIDERATIONS  
CONTINUE TO BE A PRIORITY WITH AMEMBASSY  
COLOMBO, THE GENERAL LEVEL OF HUMAN RIGHTS  
GUARANTEES IS GOOD AND IMPROVING CONTINUOUSLY IN  
SRI LANKA. THIS CONSIDERATION SHOULD NOT AFFECT  
THE PROPOSED SALE.

1G. AMEMBASSY STRONGLY RECOMMENDS THE APPROVAL  
OF THIS PROPOSED SALE.

13. POC FOR THIS ACTION IS LTC RICHARD S. GIRVEN,  
ARMY AND DEFENSE ATTACHE, USDAO COLOMBO, OR MS.  
HEATHER CARTER, MARITIME PROGRAMS SPECIALIST,  
USDAO COLOMBO.

LUNSTEAD